

Bird records from the Siang River valley, Arunachal Pradesh, India

PAUL N. NEWTON

During the course of a two-week visit to the Siang River valley in Arunachal Pradesh, N.E. India (Choudhury 1994), in December 1999 and January 2000, I recorded the birds seen, but did not actively search for them. I visited Pasighat (150 m, 28°5'N 95°20'E), Yingkiong (305 m, 28°40'N 95°2'E) and Tuting (590 m, 29°2'N 94°53'E). In addition, Mankota (1,120 m, 28°50'N 95°10'E) and Devkota (about one hour walk to the east of Mankota) in the Yang Sang Chu Valley were visited on foot from Tuting. As there are very few bird records from this area they are listed here. See Singh (1995) for a comprehensive summary of the known avifauna of Arunachal Pradesh.

SCLATER'S MONAL *Lophophorus sclateri* The tail of a male was used as a fan in a Khampa house in Mankota. The species is hunted in the surrounding mountains and was reported by villagers to be found in high forest on Titapuri, Pemshri and Riutala mountains near Mankota. It is called *jachen* in Khampa. Kumar and Singh (2000) have recently announced a new monal which is similar to *L. sclateri* except for tail coloration. The colour pattern of the tail fan from Mankota was similar to that of *L. sclateri*, rather than that of the 'new' monal. Mankota is east of the Subansiri and Siang Rivers, consistent with Kumar and Singh's contention that the 'new' monal only occurs west of the Subansiri. A photograph of the fan has been deposited with OBC. The Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos* was also identified by local people as being present from pictures in Grimmett *et al.* (1999).

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos* One seen foraging on mud on the east bank of the Siang River at Yingkiong.

RIVER TERN *Sterna aurantia* Common over the Siang River at Pasighat.

EURASIAN MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus* A male flying above the Yang Sang Chu River and mixed deciduous forest at Devkota.

GREAT CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo* One flying up the Yang Sang Chu River in mixed deciduous forest near Devkota.

GREY-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius tephronotus* Commonly seen in village gardens and scrub in Tuting.

COMMON GREEN MAGPIE *Cissa chinensis* Common around Mankota village and surrounding mixed deciduous forest.

YELLOW-BELLIED FANTAIL *Rhipidura hypoxantha* Common around Mankota village and surrounding mixed deciduous forest.

BLUE ROCK THRUSH *Monticola solitarius* Common around Mankota village and surrounding mixed deciduous forest.

LONG-BILLED THRUSH *Zoothera monticola* One foraging in the mud of vegetable gardens and hillside streams at Mankota.

SMALL NILTAVA *Niltava macgrigoriae* One seen near Mankota village in mixed deciduous forest.

ORANGE-FLANKED BUSH ROBIN *Tarsiger cyanurus* One in Mankota village scrub.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros* Common on the east bank of Siang River, Yingkiong.

DAURIAN REDSTART *Phoenicurus aureus* Several seen in gardens in Yingkiong.

SPOTTED FORKTAIL *Enicurus maculatus* Commonly seen along streams in mixed deciduous forest at Mankota.

COMMON STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata* Common in grassland on the east bank of Siang River, Yingkiong.

RED-WHISKERED BULBUL *Pycnonotus jocosus* Common in mixed deciduous forest around Mankota village.

RED-VENTED BULBUL *Pycnonotus cafer* Common in grassland and woodland on the east bank of Siang River, Pasighat.

COMMON TAILORBIRD *Orthotomus sutorius* One in a garden in Yingkiong village.

WHITE-CRESTED LAUGHINGTHRUSH *Garrulax leucolophus* Commonly seen around Mankota village in scrub and mixed deciduous forest.

SILVER-EARED MESIA *Leiothrix argentauris* A flock in bushes in Tuting village.

RUSTY-FRONTED BARWING *Actinodura egertoni* One in mixed deciduous forest around Mankota village.

WHISKERED YUHINA *Yuhina flavicollis* Common in mixed deciduous forest around Mankota village.

RUFIOUS-VENTED YUHINA *Yuhina occipitalis* A flock in mixed deciduous forest around Mankota village.

BLACK-THROATED SUNBIRD *Aethopyga saturata* A male killed by a villager using a catapult at Tuting village.

EURASIAN TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus* Common in Yingkiong village.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs* A female at Yingkiong village on 6 January 2000 is apparently the first record for Arunachal Pradesh. This species is an uncommon winter visitor in west and central Nepal and occurred as a vagrant in Bhutan (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

I am very grateful to the Governments of India and Arunachal Pradesh for permitting my visit to the state, and to the people of Arunachal, especially Mr Khampa and family, for their marvellous help, hospitality and friendship.

REFERENCES

Choudhury, S.D. (1994) *East Siang and West Siang Districts, Arunachal Pradesh District Gazetteers*. Itanagar: Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and Inskipp, T. (1995) *Birds of the Indian subcontinent*. London: Christopher Helm.
Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. and Inskipp, T. (1999) *Pocket guide to the birds of the Indian subcontinent*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
Kumar, R. S. and Singh, P. (2000) More news on the new monal discovered from Arunachal Pradesh. *Oriental Bird Club Bull.* 32: 63-65.
Singh, P. (1995) Recent bird records from Arunachal Pradesh. *Forktail* 10: 65-104.

Paul N. Newton, Centre for Tropical Medicine, Nuffield Department of Medicine, John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, OX3 9DU, U.K. Email: Newtonpaul100@hotmail.com

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*:
a new species for the Indian subcontinent

PER UNDELAND and HARKIRAT SINGH SANGHA

At about 18h15 on 10 May 1998 we were observing waders in wet fields at Harike, Punjab, India (31°13'N 75°12'E). Using telescopes at a range of about 30-35 m, we spotted a Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* which was immediately identified by PU, being familiar with the species in the U.S.A. and Europe. We took brief notes until 19h30 and returned to the field on the next day, when we watched the bird again in much better light at 11h00-12h30. It was astonishingly confiding and did not leave the field even when flushed, thus providing an opportunity for noting extra details.

The general jizz of the bird was like a Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, particularly when 'worried.' It had a pot belly, shortish-looking legs when feeding, long rear-end, smallish head on a neck which, although appearing short, became surprisingly long when stretched, producing a very thin and attenuated appearance. The main features noted were a well-demarcated band of brownish streaking across the breast which ended abruptly and contrasted with the white belly. The crown was dark and very distinct. The prominent whitish supercilium continued behind the eye. The throat was white. The mantle had dark black-brown feathers with whitish fringes. The belly was white except for some fine streaks on the upper flanks. The dark brown scapulars and coverts with buff fringes were quite prominent. The black tertials had prominent buff fringes. The closed wings reached beyond the tail. No wing-bar was noticed while the bird was in flight but streaks on lateral uppertail-coverts were seen. The underwing-coverts and axillaries were white contrasting with the

breast. The slightly decurved blackish bill had a yellow base to the lower mandible. The legs were yellowish tinged with brown-green.

Pectoral Sandpiper breeds in the Arctic Tundra, from the Taimyr Peninsula in Siberia eastwards to the southern part of the Hudson Bay in Canada, and it winters in South America, largely migrating by a direct 'Great Circle' route over the western Atlantic (Hayman *et al.* 1986). Very small numbers also winter in Australia and New Zealand. Pectoral Sandpiper is the most numerous transatlantic vagrant to Europe, with over 1,760 records in Britain alone between 1958 and 1992 (Harrop 1993). However, in Asia there is only a handful of records, and it is 'recorded in the OBC region only as a vagrant' (Inskipp *et al.* 1996). The Harike bird is the first record for the Indian subcontinent.

We thank Krys Kazmierczak for commenting on an earlier draft of this text.

REFERENCES

Hayman, P., Marchant, J. and Prater, T. (1986) *Shorebirds: an identification guide to the waders of the world*. London: Croom Helm.
Harrop, H. (1993) Identification of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Pectoral Sandpiper. *Birding World* 6: 230-238.
Inskipp, T., Lindsey, N. and Duckworth, W. (1996) *An annotated checklist of the birds of the Oriental region*. Sandy, U.K.: Oriental Bird Club.

Per Undeland, Safirvagen 8, SE-45162, Uddevalla, Sweden
Harkirat Singh Sangha, B-27, Gautam Marg, Hanuman Nagar, Jaipur 302021, India. Email: sangha@datainfosys.net